

class liberal campaign (his issues were education and the environment) and had no specific message for working-class whites, lost to Jesse Helms in North Carolina. Gantt's backing from the head of the North Carolina National Bank had the effect of inhibiting his use of the S&L scandal and distancing him from labor issues.

An economically conservative black candidate, such as Douglas Wilder, can win in the South on middle-class issues (like abortion), but a candidate of any color who occupies the progressive position has to cross the racial divide and go for a big chunk of the working-class white vote on the basis of gut economic issues. In suburban Atlanta David Worley almost licked the mighty Newt Gingrich partly because of Gingrich's opposition to the Eastern Airlines strikers and his support for the Congressional pay raise.

There were some bad blows on this Election Day—the worst was the defeat of Jim Hightower for re-election as Texas Agriculture Commissioner—and some promising victories. Politics has not been reordered. But there are signs that new movements are building, that authentic opposition to Reagan-Bushism can be a ticket to office, and that the long-awaited awakening of populism at the polls may not be as far away as most of us feared.

Present Danger

As Congress adjourned last month, eighty-two House Democrats joined in a statement, drafted by Representative Ronald Dellums, expressing "grave concern" that war might be imminent, with catastrophic consequences and massive loss of life, including 10,000 to 50,000 Americans killed. The signers stated: "We are emphatically opposed to any offensive military action." The representatives were "gravely concerned that the Administration may attempt an end-run around the Constitution" by launching a war while Congress is out of session. They demanded that the Administration "not undertake any offensive military action without the full deliberation and declaration [of war, by Congress] required by the Constitution."

Now that the election is over, with Congress out of session and the buildup in the gulf approaching completion, the period of greatest danger is just beginning. What should those, both in and out of Congress, who share these feelings of intense concern do now to reduce the risk of war by an Administration "end-run around the Constitution"? It is time to ask all who understand the present moral and physical risks to "cast your whole vote, not a strip of paper merely, but your whole influence," in Thoreau's words.

For those honorable representatives who have spoken out, and for their counterparts in the Senate, this is not the time to follow routine schedules, which for most would mean a rest period after an exhausting session and intense campaign. Urgently educating and rallying the public through town meetings, talk shows, Op-Ed columns and demonstrations—helping to organize a public movement—is surely one obligation. Above all, there is no time to lose in calling Con-

gressional hearings on the most important issue that Congress ever has to face: whether or not to go to war. Those members who already recognize that war would be catastrophic should use all their influence to bring about *immediate* hearings that can raise the rest of Congress, along with the public and the Administration itself, to that awareness.

The full Congress need not be in session for the chair of committees and subcommittees dealing with foreign affairs, armed services, intelligence and appropriations to hold hearings to investigate the following questions, among others:

§ What are the best estimates of the civilian casualties that would result from comprehensive U.S. airstrikes against Iraq and Iraqi-occupied Kuwait?

§ What are the best estimates of U.S., allied and Iraqi casualties in an air/ground/amphibious offensive to retake Kuwait, under varying assumptions? (What is the range of uncertainty? The worst case? What are the premises and the methodology of the calculations?)

§ Under what conditions might the ground war be extended throughout Iraq, and what then would be the estimated U.S. and civilian casualties?

§ What is the range of casualties that could be inflicted by Iraqi retaliatory attacks, including chemical warfare, on Israel, Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia? What is the likelihood and scale of suicidal terrorist attacks on the West?

In short, to use the Pentagon's term, what is the expected "butcher's bill" for an American-initiated offensive? How much blood will there be in the gasoline?

Other questions would include, What would be the effect of highly probable Israeli intervention, alongside the United States, on our current alliances and on prospects for collaborative peacekeeping in the region? What is the likelihood of popular uprisings against Arab or Muslim regimes now aligned with the United States, involving us in widespread counterinsurgency campaigns? And what would be the effects on the world economy of possible Iraqi retaliation against regional oil production?

The more Congress and the public come to know the range of uncertainty that President Bush is confronting, especially the more ominous possibilities, the harder it will be for the President to ignore those risks, to shut his eyes and "roll the iron dice." Moreover, as Morton Halperin of the American Civil Liberties Union has suggested, such Congressional hearings, meeting continuously in sequence during the recess, could monitor Administration intentions—by compelling testimony in closed sessions if necessary—and thus provide early warning of a need to convene the full Congress in emergency session. It could then pass legislation restraining the President from imminent offensive action.

As Eduard Shevardnadze said at the U.N., speaking of nuclear proliferation, "It is time to trigger off the emergency systems in order to save the situation." The emergency system our Constitution provides to save us from a bloody, unnecessary U.S.-initiated war is Congress. DANIEL ELLSBERG

Daniel Ellsberg, a former Defense and State Department official, revealed the Pentagon Papers to the Senate and the press during the Vietnam War.